

Immunization Questions and Answers

#1 "Why should I have my child immunized?"

All children require immunizations (shots) to protect them from a number of dangerous childhood diseases. All of these diseases can lead to very serious medical complications and, in some cases, death.

#2 "What diseases are prevented by vaccines?"

Diphtheria
Tetanus (Lockjaw)
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
Polio
Measles, Mumps and Rubella
Hemophilus influenzae type b (Hib disease)
Hepatitis B
Varicella (Chicken Pox)

#3 "How many shots would my child need?"

The following vaccinations are medically recommended **by age two**. They can be given in as few as five visits to a doctor or local health district. (In cases where a child is behind in their shots, an accelerated schedule can be used to bring them up to date):

- 4 vaccinations against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP or DTaP)
- 3 vaccinations against polio (OPV or IPV)
- 1 vaccination against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)
- 3-4 vaccinations against Hib (a major cause of spinal meningitis)
- 3 vaccinations against Hepatitis B
- 1 dose against Varicella

Doses are needed at birth, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and 12-18 months of age.

Booster doses of some vaccines will be needed between 4-6 years of age.

#4 "What about vaccine safety?"

Although serious reactions to vaccines are extremely rare, they do occur. However, the risk of serious reaction to the vaccines is much less than the effects of the diseases they are intended to prevent.

#5 "Do vaccines have any side effects at all?"

Yes, but the most common reactions are mild and tolerated very well by most children. Some side effects include a slight fever, a rash or soreness at the site of an injection. These are common reactions and need not be a reason for undue concern. Your doctor or health department can give you more information about possible side effects for specific vaccines.

#6 "What can I do if my child has a serious reaction to a vaccine?"

If you believe that your child is suffering a severe reaction, call your doctor or take your child to a medical facility immediately. Be sure to write down exactly what happened, including the date and time the reaction started. Request that your doctor, nurse, or local health district file a Vaccine Adverse Event Report form (VAERS) or call 1-800-822-7967.

#7 "Why can't I wait until my child attends school to begin vaccinations?"

Younger children and infants are generally more severely affected by these diseases. Therefore, children should get their first vaccination at birth and complete the basic series by age two to reduce the chance of illness. By immunizing on time, you can help protect your child from infection and lessen the spread of disease to others.

#8 "Why is a personal vaccination health record important?"

A personal immunization record card helps you and your doctor keep your child on schedule. A record card should be started when your child receives the first vaccination. It needs to be updated each time your child receives an immunization. This information will be needed if you move to a new area, change doctors, or when your child enrolls in child care or in a public or private school. In Idaho, licensed child care providers and all schools are required to have proof that your child has their vaccinations. Remember to take your child's immunization record with you each time your child visits the doctor or health department.

#9 "Where can I get free vaccinations?"

In Idaho, all children age 0 through 18 years are eligible to receive state-supplied (free) vaccine from participating private physicians, local health district, hospitals and community health centers. Providers may charge a small fee for giving the vaccine, but no child will be denied vaccinations due to an inability to pay.

#10 "Where can I get more information?"

Call the Idaho CareLine at 1-800-926-2588 or 1-208-332-7205 (TDD) or your local health district for more information about immunizations and vaccines.

YOU GAVE THEM LIFE. PROTECT IT.

Adapted from the American Association for World Health
Idaho Immunization Program (7/29/98)